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Garden Notes

Number One

Issued by

Lee R. Bonnewitz

Van Wert, Ohio

Second Printing

I am a Dry Goods merchant and senior member of "THE BONNEWITZ CO." and my life work has been the building up of a good retail business in our town of 8,000 population.

I am still in the Dry Goods Store or rather in the Department Store, for our business has grown very satisfactorily, and successful Dry Goods Stores naturally grow into Department Stores. Now while the management of a Dry Goods Store has been my business, Peonies have been my hobby, and during the past fifteen years I have built up a Peony collection of over nine hundred varieties, among them the very finest varieties in all the world.

My first purchase was made at the suggestion of my wife, to whom I must give all the credit for my interest in flowers, and who has been a great help to me in studying the hundreds of varieties and in making our displays at all the National Peony Shows. That first purchase—what an important event it was! And how long it took Mrs. Bonnewitz to make up my mind to spend as much as Ten Dollars on such foolish things as flowers!

But at last she had me place my name on the dotted line, and here is the order I signed:

13 Pink	Peonies @ 25c
13 Red	Peonies @ 25c
14 White	Peonies @ 25c
40	Peonies @ 25c = \$10.00

The second June following, when our peonies were at their best, we were very proud of our big collection. But

there was one fly in the ointment, for a neighbor who had only a half dozen plants had one peony for which she had paid fifty cents, and we could plainly see that her fifty-cent one was much better than any of our twenty-five-cent ones.

It was not such hard work, and it did not take Mrs. Bonnewitz as long to persuade me to order some of the fifty-cent ones, for of course we wanted to have just as fine peonies as anybody.

Two surprises awaited us the next year, for in another neighbor's garden we found two most exquisite peonies, MADAME DE VERNEVILLE and DUCHESSE DE NEMOURS. The first surprise was that the really fine peonies have names of their own, and the second surprise was that some peonies cost as much as a dollar.

That was our first introduction to the named varieties, and that year we saw our first peony catalog and purchased ten of the named varieties, being very careful to select those with the most beautiful and aristocratic names.

The next June was an eventful one in our peony experience, for then it was we saw our first M. JULES ELIE, and I can no more tell you the thoughts which went surging through my mind as I gazed upon that wonderful bloom than you, if you are a peony enthusiast, can tell me your sensations when you first beheld it. It remains today as one of the really great peonies of the world.

Two years later I was invited to visit a garden to see a new peony, a peony which a lady in Indiana had grown from a seed, and the memory of the thrill I received when I saw my first JUBILEE will remain with me as long as I live. I threw my hat on the ground, and instantly offered the owner Ten Dollars (an unheard-of price at that time) for it, but it was not for sale and money would not buy it. It took me two years to get my first JUBILEE and this is how I did it. I wrote to Mr. Shaylor and asked him for a list of the peonies which he considered the best in the world. Here is the list he sent me, and it is a mighty good list today :

ALMA, LE JOUR, KELWAY'S GLORIOUS,
PHILIPPE RIVOIRE, FRANCES SHAYLOR,
WILLIAM F. TURNER, and KELWAY'S
EXQUISITE.

I immediately ordered one each of these peonies from Mr. Shaylor and when they arrived I gave a division from each one of them to the owner of JUBILEE, and in return

I received a JUBILEE, to be my very own. It has been one of the great pleasures of my life to take Jubilee with me to the National Shows of THE AMERICAN PEONY SOCIETY, and hear the expressions of surprise, pleasure, wonder and delight from the visitors at the show who see my peony for the first time.

I should not say "my" Peony, for it is Mrs. Pleas's peony for she developed it from the seed, and yet I take no offense when I am spoken of as the JUBILEE man, and I hear that expression quite often.

Now being the owner of what I considered the best peony in the world, I naturally wished to have a collection of all the other good varieties, and for years I have imported from DESSERT, MILLET, RIVOIRE, CROUX, RIVIERE and LEMOINE in France, and from BARR, and KELWAY in England, so that I have all the good foreign varieties in my garden.

I have been glad to purchase from SHAYLOR, BRAND, ROSENFELD, THURLOW and FRANKLIN here in the United States, and I am glad to say these gentlemen have introduced as fine peonies as ever came across the ocean. I am trying to buy every new one as fast as they are put on the market, and in this manner keep my collection up to date. I now have in my Garden over nine hundred varieties of Peonies, and in the blooming season I have the name of each one prominently displayed, so it is easy for visitors to study the different varieties.

I have over Six Thousand plants ready to sell, every one of which I have planted, staked and labeled myself, for although I hire gardeners to cultivate my peonies, I allow no one to plant, divide or stake, label and dig them, for it is too great a responsibility to allow anyone else to assume. I want to get the reputation of having every peony true to name, and so I do the work myself, knowing that there is a demand at a fair price for the best peonies true to name.*

Every peony I sell has had my own individual attention ever since it has been in my garden, for when it first arrived I planted it with own hands, staked it and labeled it, and when it grew sufficiently large, I dug it up, and with my

* Since these Garden Notes were first published my business has grown to such an extent that I have had to train in a man to do my planting for me. Our rule is to place the root so that the eyes are one inch higher than the level ground in the bed, and then cover the eyes with two inches of the finest soil we can procure.

own hands divided it and again planted, staked and labeled it, and when it leaves my garden for yours, it will again have my personal attention.

This kind of work is a pleasure to me, as it keeps me out in God's pure air and allows me to enjoy the clouds, the sunshine, the trees, the birds and particularly my peonies, for I enjoy them from the early days in April when they first thrust their heads through the soil, through all the months of Spring, Summer and Autumn, and it is with pleasant recollections that I see my garden covered with a mantle of snow for its Winter protection.

In June, 1916, I saw in a garden in St. Paul, Minn., a most beautiful large pure white bloom on a very tall thrifty plant, and the owner told me it was LA LORRAINE. It pleased me so much that I told my friends "LA LORRAINE is one of the best peonies in the world," and at every Peony Show I have looked for it, and in every garden I have visited I have asked for it, but I have never seen that same beautiful bloom since. I was so interested in LA LORRAINE that I purchased it from one of the largest growers in the U. S. I imported it from Holland, and in 1916 and again in 1917, I imported it direct from Lemoine, but up till my visit to the Reading show, I saw no bloom from any of my plants; but at the show, in Mr. Boyd's wonderful gold medal collection I found a full rose shape beautiful medium size light pink Peony bearing the name LA LORRAINE. I visited Mr. Boyd's garden and again saw the pink bloom on a medium dwarf plant, and received Mr. Boyd's assurance that LA LORRAINE was pink and dwarf and not tall and white. Leaving Mr. Boyd's garden I came directly home and found in my own garden the LA LORRAINE I imported from Holland blooming just exactly like Mr. Boyd's, but the other 3 purchases of the variety failed to bloom.

I had just about become converted to the pink LA LORRAINE, when I received a letter from a Chicago grower telling me he did not like my knock on LA LORRAINE, and that he had for sale some healthy stock and that it is a splendid white Peony. I will not offer any of my LA LORRAINES for sale until I can find out which is true, pink or white, tall or dwarf.

I have a splendid 40-inch tall Peony which has round buds which open out into extra large apple blossom pink blooms and for years I have been sure I owned the genuine

LA FRANCE. At the Peony Show I found a smaller pink bloom (of nearly the same shade) which grows on dwarf plants and which develops its beauty through a very pointed bud, and I was assured that the dwarf plant and pointed bud were characteristics of the genuine LA FRANCE.

I will not offer my LA FRANCE for sale until this question is decided, and the members who have not yet purchased LA FRANCE now will have an opportunity to make some investigations before they invest their money.

In 1918 I purchased from T. C. Thurlow's Sons a new variety of Peony which they had just named for the most popular man in the whole world at that time, President Wilson. They did not send me the plant till September, 1919, but because they kept me waiting a whole year they sent me an extra large plant. When it arrived I made 4 divisions of it, and every one of them bloomed. It began blooming after I came home from the Peony Show and I am going to give you here the notes I made in my garden concerning it.

June 16—PRESIDENT WILSON blooming today. Fair size, delicate flesh-pink color, splendid quality of petals, as beautiful even as Frances Willard. Pink has not faded at 9:40 a. m.

June 17—A very good late pale pink.

June 20—Splendid quality most delicate shell pink, which does not fade in the sun, good keeping quality, has carmine marking on outer guards.

June 21—Still in bloom, pink has not faded.

June 23—Holds quality in garden excellently, of Milton Hill color and quality, but seems to hold color better than Milton Hill.

June 25—Still retains some of the pink in the garden.

June 26—Last bloom will fall today, but it still retains some of the pink and the petals still show the good quality.

PRIMEVERE is just as good a peony as LAURA DESERT. In fact I think PRIMEVERE is a little the better, but there is a big supply of the one and a small supply of the other, so LAURA sells at \$25.00 and you can buy PRIMEVERE at \$5.00.

LONGFELLOW is, I believe, the best pure red peony in the world, yet because it has been on the market several years, it can be bought for \$10.00, while PHILIPPE RIVOIRE, a new red one from France, sells for twice as much.

The same thing is true of many others, and you must not be guided solely by price in selecting your fine varieties.

There has probably been more controversy over the peony EUGENE VERDIER than over any other one variety. In order to satisfy myself as to which of the several peonies sold under that name is the true one, I have bought it from 4 American growers, 1 Holland grower, 1 English grower and 2 French growers.

The true EUGENE VERDIER is very sturdy, with a very stiff bloom stalk bearing a pink bloom with a very decided lemon yellow collar. It is a very desirable variety, and it is a great pity that our American growers have become so confused over it.

I am often asked about extremely early varieties and here are the earliest Sinensis or Chinese varieties to bloom in my garden: ZOE VERNIORY, a medium small variety with pink guards and inner petals of light yellow which soon fade. Its one good quality is its earliness, for it was the first Peony in bloom in my garden.

MRS. GWYN LEWIS (Kelway) was the second to bloom and it was only one day later and very much superior to ZOE VERNIORY. It opens pink and fades white, has good size, fairly good quality and a blooming season which lasts a full week. I think it good enough to offer for sale, and I will make some divisions in September and plant them for sale next year.

UMBELLATA ROSEA came next, and on some 4-year-old plants which had been disbudded I found blooms which were so extra good that I cut them for the Reading Show, and placed them in cold storage, but in the excitement of packing my 800 blooms I left these early ones in my basement. They were nearly as large as the later variety EUGENE VERDIER and a quite similar color, without, of course, the lemon-yellow collar. Every garden should have UMBELLATA ROSEA both for cut bloom and for landscape effect. I consider it one of the most valuable peonies in existence.

LE CYGNE and JUBILEE are both early peonies, but are not in the extra early class.

LEE R. BONNEWITZ,
Van Wert, Ohio.

Aug. 6, 1920.

P. S.—Since these Notes were first published I have issued Garden Notes No. 2, No. 3, and No. 4. If you do not already have them, and if you want them, I will be glad to send them to you.

